

**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] REMARKS FROM THE BRIEFING ANNOUNCING THE SUPERSEDING INDICTMENT OF JULIAN ASSANGE

**Date:** Thursday, May 23, 2019 at 3:23:34 PM Pacific Daylight Time

**From:** USDOJ-Office of Public Affairs

**To:** Farivar, Cyrus (NBCUniversal)

The United States Department of Justice

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
THURSDAY, MAY 23, 2019

## **REMARKS FROM THE BRIEFING ANNOUNCING THE SUPERSEDING INDICTMENT OF JULIAN ASSANGE**

**Remarks as Prepared for Delivery by**

**Assistant Attorney General for National Security John C. Demers**

Today, we announce that a grand jury in the Eastern District of Virginia has returned an indictment with seventeen additional felony charges against WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange.

I want to thank U.S. Attorney Zach Terwilliger as well as the FBI agents and the prosecutors in the Eastern District of Virginia and the National Security Division who investigated this case over the years.

One of the Department of Justice's top priorities is to prosecute, and therefore deter, unauthorized disclosures of classified information. In the past two years, we have brought four cases involving the leaks of such information. This is the fifth.

In 2013, Chelsea Manning was convicted by court martial for offenses that involved violations of her military oath to protect and defend the United States. As you know, she provided Julian Assange and WikiLeaks with hundreds of thousands of pages of national defense information.

The indictment today charges Julian Assange for his alleged complicity in Manning's actions, including his explicit solicitation of classified information and his encouraging her to remove classified information from U.S. systems and send it to him. The indictment also charges Assange for his posting of a narrow subset of classified documents on WikiLeaks that allegedly identified the names of human sources—including local Afghans and Iraqis who were assisting U.S. forces in theater, and those of journalists, religious leaders, human rights advocates, and political dissidents living in repressive regimes. Assange thereby is alleged to have created grave and imminent risk to their lives and liberty.

These alleged actions disclosed our sensitive, classified information in a manner that made it available to every terrorist group, hostile foreign intelligence service and opposing military. Documents relating to these disclosures were even found in the Usama bin Laden compound. This release made our adversaries stronger and more knowledgeable and the United States less secure.

Some say that Assange is a journalist and that he should be immune from prosecution for

these actions.

The Department takes seriously the role of journalists in our democracy and we thank you for it. It is not and has never been the Department's policy to target them for their reporting.

Julian Assange is no journalist. This made plain by the totality of his conduct as alleged in the indictment—i.e., his conspiring with and assisting a security clearance holder to acquire classified information, and his publishing the names of human sources.

Indeed, no responsible actor—journalist or otherwise—would purposely publish the names of individuals he or she knew to be confidential human sources in war zones, exposing them to the gravest of dangers. And this is just what the superseding indictment charges Julian Assange with doing. The new charges seek to hold him responsible in light of the full breadth of his illegal conduct.

I'd like to turn it over to Zach now to say a few words about his office's efforts.

### **Remarks as Prepared for Delivery by**

#### **U.S. Attorney G. Zachary Terwilliger for the Eastern District of Virginia**

Today, a federal grand jury sitting in the Eastern District of Virginia returned an 18-count superseding indictment charging Julian P. Assange, founder of WikiLeaks, with offenses that relate to his alleged role in one of the largest compromises of classified information in the history of the United States.

Let me be clear about what Assange is charged with, and what he is not charged with.

Assange is charged for his alleged complicity in illegal acts to obtain or receive voluminous databases of classified information and for agreeing and attempting to obtain classified information through computer hacking.

The United States has not charged Assange for passively obtaining or receiving classified information.

The indictment alleges that Assange published in bulk hundreds of thousands of these stolen classified documents.

But the United States has not charged Assange for that.

Instead, the United States has only charged Assange for publishing a narrow set of classified documents in which Assange also allegedly published the un-redacted names of innocent people who risked their safety and freedom to provide information to the United States and its allies.

These sources included local Afghans and Iraqis, journalists, religious leaders, human rights advocates, and political dissidents from repressive regimes.

The indictment alleges that Assange knew that his publication of these sources endangered them.

To be clear again . . . Assange is not charged simply because he is a publisher.

In making any prosecutorial decision, the United States looks to the principles of federal prosecution, which provide that . . . A determination to prosecute represents a policy

judgment that the fundamental interests of society require the application of federal criminal law to a particular set of circumstances.

The superseding indictment reflects these principles.

My sincere thanks to prosecutors and our law enforcement partners at the National Security Division and the FBI for their outstanding work and commitment to this case.

**Remarks as Prepared for Delivery by  
FBI Assistant Director for Counterintelligence John Brown**

Good afternoon. The superseding charges unsealed today are the result of nearly a decade of investigative work by FBI counterintelligence agents. Today's charges illustrate the priority the FBI places on enforcing the laws that protect our nation's security and vital intelligence sources.

We are dedicated to pursuing investigations into unauthorized disclosures of U.S. national defense information. This is particularly true when unauthorized disclosures allegedly can include the names and identifiable information of intelligence sources who have risked their personal safety—and at times their lives—to provide the U.S. government with information.

While technological advances have improved the way the U.S. government shares and disseminates our most sensitive information, they have also made it more challenging to secure it. It is easier today than ever for clearance holders and non-state actors to widely and anonymously disseminate our nation's secrets out in the open.

The FBI is committed to investigating this type of alleged criminal activity no matter how long a case may take. We are here today thanks in large part to the coordination and support of our partners and the work of the men and women of the FBI's Washington Field Office. Their dedication to this case deserves tremendous recognition.

I would also like to thank the Department of Justice and the Eastern District of Virginia for their commitment to this case.

Thank you.

# # #

NSD

19-575

Do not reply to this message. If you have questions, please use the contacts in the message or call the Office of Public Affairs at 202-514-2007.

Follow us:    

---

This email was sent to cyrus.farivar@nbcuni.com using GovDelivery, on behalf of [U.S. Department of Justice Office of Public Affairs](#) · 950 Pennsylvania Ave., NW · Washington, DC 20530 · 202-514-2007 · TTY (866) 544-5309. GovDelivery may not use your subscription information for any other purposes. [Click here to unsubscribe](#).

[Department of Justice Privacy Policy](#) | [GovDelivery Privacy Policy](#)